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2001HOCHI01265 - UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ8986

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OMB-01
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	SS-00
	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00
	/005W						

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FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5681  
INFO AMEMBASSY HANOI

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 001265

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR BCLTV ALLAN LANGLAND

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VN](#)

SUBJECT: HCMC PARTY COMMISSION ON IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE FAVORS FOREIGN INVESTMENT

1.(U) SUMMARY: CONSUL GENERAL PAID A COURTESY CALL NOVEMBER 6 ON MS. PHAM PHUONG THAO, HEAD OF THE HO CHI MINH CITY PARTY COMMISSION ON IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE. IN A CORDIAL MEETING, PHAM EXPLAINED SHE DEALS WITH A VERY BROAD RANGE OF ISSUES, INCLUDING URBAN PLANNING. SHE SPOKE AT LENGTH ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTRACTING FOREIGN INVESTMENT TO HCMC AND ON THE PROBLEMS FLOWING FROM  
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INTERNAL MIGRATION. SHE ALSO EXPLAINED HOW THE COMMISSION CHECKS THE MEDIA TO ENSURE ITS CONTENT FITS PARTY POLICIES, ALTHOUGH SOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM IS PERMITTED. END SUMMARY.

2.(U) FOREIGN INVESTMENT: PHAM EMPHASIZED HCMC'S IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ROLE IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF VIETNAM. SHE SAID FOREIGN INVESTMENT HAS ALREADY HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE CITY AND SURROUNDING PROVINCES, INCREASING BOTH OPPORTUNITIES AND AVAILABLE SERVICES. SHE BELIEVES LOCAL AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN TRANSPORTATION, EDUCATION, MEDICINE, MEDIA AND CULTURE IS CRUCIAL TO BOTH THE CITY'S DEVELOPMENT AND ITS EFFORTS TO COMBAT SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

3.(U) PHAM WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE MANY NEW BUSINESSES THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN HCMC AND WANTS MORE. SHE NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH 5,000 BUSINESSES HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE PAST YEAR IN HCMC, SOME 3,000 BUSINESSES HAVE CLOSED. INJECTING A BIT OF HUMOR INTO THE PROCEEDINGS, PHAM SAID SHE WAS COMMITTED TO THE MARKET SYSTEM OF ECONOMICS, BUT IT WOULD BE NICER TO SEE A "BETTER RATIO OF BUSINESS START-UPS TO BUSINESS FAILURES."

4.(U) INTERNAL MIGRATION: PHAM HIGHLIGHTED INTERNAL MIGRATION AS A MAJOR FACTOR IN HCMC'S RAPID GROWTH. RURAL MIGRANTS TO HCMC PRIMARILY COME IN SEARCH OF BETTER PAYING JOBS, WITH SALARIES FOR THE MENIAL JOBS THEY FIND GENERALLY RANGING BETWEEN 40 TO 60 USD PER MONTH. BUT HCMC IS SEEING SOME CITY RESIDENTS  
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MIGRATING TO NEIGHBORING PROVINCES. THIS OUT-MIGRATION IS DRIVEN BY THE DESIRE FOR HIGHER PAYING FACTORY JOBS, WITH SALARIES AVERAGING 100 USD PER MONTH. PHAM SAW THIS OUTFLOW OF WELL-EDUCATED PEOPLE AS A PROBLEM, AND SAID FOREIGN INVESTMENT TO BUILD ADDITIONAL FACTORIES IN HCMC WOULD HELP COMBAT THIS.

5.(U) MIGRATION ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS PROSTITUTION AND BEGGING. PHAM STATED THAT FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN HCMC BUSINESSES IS KEY TO HELPING ALLEVIATE THESE SOCIAL PROBLEMS. SHE BELIEVES FOREIGN INVESTMENT WILL HELP PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE OTHERWISE RELYING ON THESE ACTIVITIES FOR THEIR INCOME.

6.(U) MASS TRANSIT: PHAM STATED THAT THE CITY DESPERATELY NEEDS A MASS TRANSIT SYSTEM, EMPHASIZING THE ROLE FOREIGN INVESTMENT COULD PLAY IN ITS CREATION. SHE URGED U.S. BUSINESSES TO INVEST IN MASS TRANSIT FOR HCMC. AT A MINIMUM, PHAM BELIEVES HCMC NEEDS TWO MASS

TRANSIT CORRIDORS (NORTH-SOUTH AND EAST-WEST). IN ADDITION TO MASS TRANSIT, ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING TRAFFIC LAWS IS KEY TO MANAGING HCMC'S TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS. PHAM HIGHLIGHTED THE CURRENT EFFORT TO TEACH DRIVERS IN HCMC TO FOLLOW BASIC TRAFFIC RULES, CALLING IT AN "IMMENSE TASK". SHE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS PUBLIC EDUCATION EFFORT -- ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO LAST ONE YEAR -- MIGHT HAVE TO BE EXTENDED IN ORDER TO PRODUCE THE DESIRED RESULTS.

7.(U) MEDIA CONTROLS: ANOTHER ASPECT OF HCMC'S ROLE IN UNCLASSIFIED

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THE SOUTHERN PART OF VIETNAM IS ITS FUNCTION AS A CENTER FOR INFORMATION AND THE MEDIA. PHAM SAID PEOPLE IN HCMC ARE "THIRSTY" FOR NEWS - DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL. IN HER POSITION AS HEAD OF THE HCMC PARTY COMMISSION ON IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE, PHAM IS INSTRUMENTAL IN SETTING THE POLICY AND REGULATIONS THAT GOVERN THE MEDIA HERE. SHE SAID THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION IS TASKED WITH IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY. PRINT MEDIA IN HCMC SUBMIT A COPY OF THEIR PUBLICATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION, WHERE IT IS EVALUATED IN LIGHT OF THE POLICY AND REGULATIONS ESTABLISHED BY THE PARTY COMMISSION. IF THE MATERIAL FAILS THE EVALUATION, IT CANNOT BE PUBLISHED. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH CERTAIN TYPES OF CRITICISM ARE ACCEPTED BY THE GVN, THE PRINT MEDIA PRACTICES SELF-CENSORSHIP TO AVOID PROBLEMS WITH EITHER THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION OR THE PARTY COMMISSION.)

8.(U) CG ASKED PHAM ABOUT THE MEDIA'S FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ESPECIALLY RELATING TO EDITORIALS. CG ALSO INQUIRED HOW FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS COULD BEST ASK FOR CORRECTIONS IN ARTICLES OR COMMENTARY THAT DO NOT ACCURATELY REFLECT THE FACTS OR THEIR VIEWS. PHAM REPLIED THAT THE HCMC MEDIA SOMETIMES PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM THAT STRENGTHENS THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT. SUCH CRITICISM HAS SOMETIMES LED TO THE GVN IMPLEMENTING DIFFERENT PROPOSALS. HOWEVER, SHE ALSO NOTED THAT SOMETIMES THE MEDIA DO NOT HAVE ALL THE FACTS ABOUT A CASE. IN THOSE INSTANCES, THE LOCAL UNCLASSIFIED

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GOVERNMENT INVOLVED COMMUNICATES WITH THE MEDIA IN HCMC AND INFORMS THEM OF THEIR MISTAKES. THE MEDIA THEN AMEND THEIR STATEMENTS AND PUBLISH THE CORRECT INFORMATION. LIKEWISE, SOMETIMES THE MEDIA DO NOT HAVE ALL THE FACTS ABOUT EVENTS OR POLICIES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES. THE LOCAL MEDIA ARE AWARE OF THIS, AND THE COMMISSION URGES THEM TO BE OPEN TO MORE SOURCES OF INFORMATION. CG STATED SHE WOULD TAKE UP THAT OFFER AND WOULD PROVIDE REPORTERS WITH ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT U.S. EVENTS/POLICIES. THE MEETING CONCLUDED WITH BOTH PHAM AND THE CG EXPRESSING THEIR COMMITMENT TO CONTINUED OPENNESS AND ACCESSIBILITY.

9.(U) COMMENT: PHAM WAS NOTABLE FOR HER IMPRESSIVE COMMAND OF THE FACTS UNDERLYING HER BROAD AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY. SHE SPOKE VERY SOFTLY, BUT WITH A RAPID-FIRE DELIVERY, LISTING STATISTICS FROM MEMORY TO SUPPORT HER STATEMENTS IN ALL SUBJECT AREAS. HER MANNER REMAINED FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT, INCLUDING WHEN MORE SENSITIVE AREAS WERE BROACHED. THE IMPRESSION SHE LEFT IS THAT THE PARTY COMMISSION ON IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE REACHES BEYOND ITS NAME, TOUCHING MANY ASPECTS OF LIFE IN HCMC -- INCLUDING THE PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF URBAN PLANNING. END COMMENT. YAMAUCHI

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